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A Letter-Based Analysis Of Kishorachandrananda Champu

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Abstract

This paper digs into a very specific form of writing: the Champū Kābyas, a poetic genre where each composition revolves around a specific letter (in this case, encompassing all 34 consonants of the Odia language). The focal point of each song lies in the meticulous and repetitive usage of a particular chosen letter, as the poet attempts to saturate the verses with the presence of that particular letter. Through a detailed analysis, this paper provides insights into the frequency and patterns of utilisation for each consonant across different songs of the Kiśorachandrānanda Champū by Kabisūrjya Baḷadeba Ratha, one of the most prolific and important Odia writers. By quantifying the instances of each letter's usage, the study sheds light on the linguistic nuances and stylistic variations employed by poets in crafting these lyrical works like consonance, assonance and alliterations that enrich the spoken quality of the text. This analysis will also help in understanding the nuances of the Odia language, contributing to a deeper appreciation of its linguistic richness and Kabisūrjya's literary prowess.

Keywords: Odissi Music, Kishorachandrananda Champu, Kabisurjya Baladeba Ratha, Odia literature

Introduction to Champū literature

Champu, or Champu Kabya (चम्पु काव्य, ଚମ୍ପୂ କାବ୍ୟ), represents a distinctive genre within Indian literature with its roots in Sanskrit. This literary form seamlessly weaves together prose [ଗଦ୍ୟକାବ୍ୟ (Gadya kabya)] and poetic passages [ପଦ୍ୟକାବ୍ୟ (Padya kabya)], interspersing verses amid prose sections.

This literary form typically incorporates vivid descriptions presented in verse, while the narrative unfolds primarily in prose. Champu, hence, is an amalgamation of words, featuring a blend of prosaic and poetic elements. Instances of such a combination can be found in the Puranas, where prose is interspersed among verses. However, it is during the classical period that this recognized literary style gained prominence. The rise of Champu is attributed to the post-Mahakavyas and prose romance era, as these genres often featured a fusion of ornate prose and verse.[1]

The Champū genre finds its roots in Sanskrit, with King Bhoja's Sanskrit Champū being particularly renowned. Bhoja, the renowned king of Dhara who ruled from 1018 to 1063 AD, is credited with the composition of Ramayana-Champu, also known as Bhoja-Champu or Champu-Ramayana. Bhoja's composition covers the narrative up to the end of Sundarakanda, with the Yuddha-kanda being authored by Lakshmanakavi at a later date. The Champu employs various metres, and the prose section is characterised by lengthy compounds akin to gadya-kavyas, making it a beloved piece among Ramayana enthusiasts.

Throughout the mediaeval period and into the present day, poets have continued to produce numerous Champūs with diverse titles.[1]

In the context of Odia Champu compositions, each song is dedicated to a letter of the Odia alphabet, with every stanza in the song commencing with the same letter, and using as much of the same letter within every line too. Crafting such compositions demands a certain level of literary skill, as the play with the alphabet should not diminish the lyrical charm or rhythmic qualities of the verse. The manipulation of language results in unique sound effects, including alliteration, consonance, and assonance, when the Champū is sung or recited.

Introduction to Kabisūrjya Baḷadeba Ratha

Kabisurjya Baladeba Ratha (c. 1789-1845) stands as a prominent figure in Indian literature, writing mostly in Odia and Sanskrit. Renowned as a poet, composer, and musician, Kabisurjya's contributions are mostly in Odissi music, where he left an indelible mark as a poet-composer of the Champū, Chaupadi, and Chautisa form of literature. His musical oeuvre encompasses a vast array of compositions, numbering in the hundreds and very much rooted in the tradition of Odissi music, featuring distinct ragas and talas.

Kabisurjya's magnum opus, the Kiśorachandrānanda Champū, written during his time at the court of the King of Athgarh, has occupied a central position in the Odissi music and dance repertoire. Widely celebrated for the beautiful compositions in the Champū, he has left an enduring legacy in Odissi Classical Music. His versatility is evident in his bilingual proficiency, as he wrote eloquently in both Sanskrit and Odia. Recognised for the devotional touch embedded in his works, Kabisurjya Baladeba Ratha also holds the honour of being the founder of the Dhumpa Sangita tradition.

Introduction to the Kiśorachandrānanda Champū

In Odia literature, Champu compositions stand out, often adhering to a distinctive feature, special to Odia literature. A Champu in Odia typically written in the Champu-Chautisa style where it comprises 34 songs, each dedicated to a consonant of the alphabet. This structural rule, while not explicitly defined in Sanskrit conventions, finds adherence in the majority of Odia Champu creations. Every line within a song commences with its assigned letter, exemplifying a meticulous adherence to linguistic principles. The 18th-century "Kiśoracandrānanda Campū" (Kishorachandrananda Champu), is colloquially also known as the "Kiśori Campū" (Kishori Champu).

To illustrate this writing style with an example, let's take the first song, i.e., the "କ" song of the Kiśorachandrānanda Champū:

"**କି** ହେଲା ରେ, **କ**ହିତ ନୁହଇ ଭାରତୀରେ
କାଲି ଯା ଦୂରରୁ ଦେଖି, **କ**ଳନା **କ**ଲା ମୋ ଆଖି
କଳା ଇନ୍ଦୀବର ଆରତିରେ ॥ପଦ॥"

Transliteration:

"**ki** helā re, **ka**hita nuhai bhāratīre
kāli jā dūraru dekhi, **ka**ḷanā **ka**lā mo ākhi
kaḷā indībara āratire ॥pada॥"

Here, as can be seen, every line starts with the letter "କ" (ka), and an attempt has also been made to incorporate as much of the letter inside the lines as is aesthetically and meaningfully possible.

This Champu is a groundbreaking work that narrates the tale of Radha and Krishna's romance through 34 Odissi songs. These can be sung as standalone songs, yet they are very much a part of the series. This has

been achieved by Baladeba Ratha using a special feature. In this Champū, every song is a monologue by a character.

For example, the first song ("କ" (ka) song) is a dialogue by Radha, being said to Lalita where Radha is confessing her overwhelming feelings about Krishna. While the next one ("ଖ" (kha) song) is a reply by Lalita to Radha's dialogue in the previous song, where Lalita admonishes Radha for being careless, not heeding their warning (of not looking towards Yamuna where Krishna is known to wander) and aiming for something she can never get (i.e., Krishna's affection), and so on.

These dialogues go on and on between Radha and Lalita, and Krishna and Lalita, with the story reaching the climax in the 25th song, i.e., the "ମି" song where Radha and Krishna finally meet. Although the two central characters of this book are obviously, Radha and Krishna, Lalita takes up the bulk of the songs. Lalita plays the role of exchanging messages between Radha and Krishna. Each song is set to different Odissi ragas and talas. Notably, Kiśori Champū holds a significant position in Odissi music.

1. An Analysis of the Letters

1.1. Exceptions in the Kiśorachandrānanda Champū

In some songs of the Kiśorachandrānanda Champū, an intriguing linguistic aspect related to the usage of specific letters such as "ଢ" (ṅa), "ଞ" (ña), and "ଣ" (ṇa) becomes evident. An interesting phenomenon is observed in these instances, where instead of utilising the letters "ଢ" (ṅa), "ଞ" (ña), and "ଣ" (ṇa), the poet, Kabisurjya, employs alternative letters as substitutes to capture the essence of the intended pronunciation. If anything, this linguistic adaptation highlights the fluidity and adaptability of the language. This substitution phenomenon may occur for a variety of reasons:

- Extreme Rarity of Words- there could be an exceptionally low number of words starting with those letters.
- Limited Overall Usage of the Letters- the usage of the specified letters might be scarce, with only a handful of words incorporating them.
- Non-Existence of Words- words commencing with those particular letters might be non-existent in Odia.

1.2. Density of a Particular Letter

In this we shall be calculating the percentage of words containing a specific letter in that specific letter's song (eg: the number of times the letter "କ" has been used in the "କ" song). These occurrences have been calculated and cross-checked several times over a period of 6 months.

Another important consideration is that the compound letters where the focal letter is not the main letter, have also not been taken into account while counting.

The percentage of words containing a specific letter in that specific letter's song is computed using the following formula:

$$\frac{Frequency\ of\ the\ Letter}{Total\ Number\ of\ Words\ in\ the\ Song} \times 100$$

Through this formula, we come up with two conclusions:

- higher the frequency of a certain letter in a song, the higher the density (a direct relationship or directly proportional).
- lower the total number of words in a song, the higher the density (an indirect relationship or inversely proportional).

Table 1: Table showing frequency of occurrence of a letter and total number of words in a song

Sl. no.	Letter	Gīta/Song	Frequency of the Letter	Total Number of Words	% of Words with the Letter
1.	କ (ka)	କି ହେଲା ରେ! (ki helā re!)	43	114	37.72
2.	ଖ (kha)	ଖରାପ ତୁ ହେଲୁ (kharāpa tu helu)	15	72	20.83
3.	ଗ (ga)	ଗଲାଣି ତ ଗଲା (galāṇi ta galā)	33	118	27.97
4.	ଘ (gha)	ଘେନାଇ ଆମ୍ଭେ (ghenāi āmbhe)	21	110	19.09
5.	ଙ^ (ṅa)	ନୂଆ ନଟପଟଳୀ ମୂକୁଟ (nūā naṭapaṭaḷī mūkuṭa)	42	87	48.28
6.	ଚ (ca)	ଚାହିଁ ଚାହିଁ ତୋ ସରଣୀ (cāhiñ cāhiñ to saraṇī)	46	165	27.88
7.	ଛ (cha)	ଛଳବାହିନୀଶ ହେ (chaḷabāhinīśa he)	15	48	31.25
8.	ଜ (ja)	ଜାଣିଛି ମୁଁ ଏତେ (jāṇichi muñ ete)	22	95	23.16
9.	ଝ (jha)	ଝଗଡ଼ି ମାତ୍ର ହେଲ (jhagaḍi mātra hela)	15	51	29.41
10.	ଞ^ (ña)	ନଭାଙ୍ଗରେ ଶୁଭାଙ୍ଗି (nabhāṅgare śubhāṅgi)	23	60	38.33
11.	ଟ (ṭa)	ଟଙ୍କାରି କି ଶ୍ରବ (ṭaṅkāri ki śraba)	16	73	21.92
12.	ଠ (ṭha)	ଠିକ ଠ ବର୍ତ୍ତୁଳ (ṭhika ṭha barttuḷa)	10	66	15.15
13.	ଡ (ḍa)	ଡର ନାହିଁ କି ହେ (ḍara nāhiñ ki he)	18	88	20.45
14.	ଢ (ḍha)	ଢାଳେ ତ ତାଳିଲୁ ନାହିଁ (ḍhāḷe ta tāḷilu nāhiñ)	8	68	11.76
15.	ଣ^ (ṇa)	ଅତସୀ କୁସୁମସମ (atasī kusumasama)	16	68	23.53
16.	ତ (ta)	ତୋ ଘେନି ତମାଳ ଶ୍ୟାମ (to gheni tamāḷa śyāma)	33	89	37.08
17.	ଥ (tha)	ଥାପିରେ କହ (thāpire kaha)	8	51	15.69

18.	ଦ (da)	ଦୁଃଖୀ ଧନ (duḥkhī dhana)	37	100	37.00
19.	ଧ (dha)	ଧୀରାରେ କି (ଧୀରାରେ କି)	18	66	27.27
20.	ନ (na)	ନବ ବିଳାସିନି ରେ (naba biḷāsini re)	61	121	50.41
21.	ପ (pa)	ପ୍ରିୟ ସହି (priya sahi)	36	101	35.64
22.	ଫ (pha)	ଫାଟି ପଡ଼ିବାରୁ (phāṭi paḍibāru)	22	141	15.60
23.	ବ (ba)	ବିଚକ୍ଷଣା ରେ (bicakṣaṇā re)	29	75	38.67
24.	ଭ (bha)	ଭଙ୍ଗୀ ଚାହାଁ (bhaṅgī cāhāñ)	33	156	21.15
25.	ମ (ma)	ମଧୁରେ ମନ୍ଦ ମନ୍ଦ (madhure manda manda)	70	167	41.92
26.	ଯ (jā)	ଯୋଷାବର ରେ (jōṣābara re)	14	82	17.07
27.	ର (ra)	ରସାଳସା ରେ (rasāḷasā re)	36	58	62.07
28.	ଲ (la)	ଲୀଳାନିଧି ହେ (līḷānidhi he)	33	99	33.33
29.	ବ (ba)	ବିଚିତ୍ର ମଞ୍ଜୁଳାରେ ବାଳା (bicitra mañjuḷāre bāḷā)	48	111	43.24
30.	ଶ (śa)	ଶ୍ୟାମ ଶିଖଣ୍ଡ ଚୂଳ (śyāma śikhaṇḍa cūḷa)	15	68	22.06
31.	ସ (sa)	ସପତଟି ମୋରରେ (sapataṭi morare)	38	112	33.99
32.	ଷ (ṣa)	ଷଟପଦ ନୀଳକେଶା (ṣaṭapada nīḷakeśā)	1	79	1.27
33.	ହ (ha)	ହରି ଆମ୍ଭର ହେ ଏତ (hari āmbhara he eta)	16	65	24.62
34.	କ୍ଷ (kṣa)	କ୍ଷମାନୁକମ୍ପାଧର ହେ (kṣamānukampādhara he)	7	117	5.98

The above data is pictured in the next 2 figures

Structured Consonants:

Aspiration →	Unaspirated (ଅଳ୍ପପ୍ରାଣ) alpaprāṇa		Aspirated (ମହାପ୍ରାଣ) mahāprāṇa		Unaspirated (ଅଳ୍ପପ୍ରାଣ) alpaprāṇa		Aspirated (ମହାପ୍ରାଣ) mahāprāṇa		Unaspirated (ଅଳ୍ପପ୍ରାଣ) alpaprāṇa	
Voicing→	Voiceless (ଅଘୋଷ) aghoṣa				Voiced (ଘୋଷ) ghoṣa				Nasal (ଅନୁନାସିକ) anunāsika	
Velar (କଣ୍ଠ୍ୟ)	କ	ka (କ)	ଖ	kha (ଖ)	ଗ	ga (ଗ)	ଘ	gha (ଘ)	ଙ	ṅa (ଙ)
	37.72%		20.83%		27.97%		19.09%		-	
Palatal (ତାଲବ୍ୟ)	ଚ	ca (ଚ)	ଛ	cha (ଛ)	ଜ	ja (ଜ)	ଝ	jha (ଝ)	ଞ	ña (ଞ)
	27.88%		31.25%		23.16%		29.41%		-	
Retroflex (ମୂର୍ଦ୍ଧନ୍ୟ)	ଟ	ṭa (ଟ)	ଠ	ṭha (ଠ)	ଡ	ḍa (ଡ)	ଢ	ḍha (ଢ)	ଣ	ṇa (ଣ)
	21.92%		15.15%		20.45%		11.76%		-	
Dental (ଦନ୍ତ୍ୟ)	ତ	ta (ତ)	ଥ	tha (ଥ)	ଦ	da (ଦ)	ଧ	dha (ଧ)	ନ	na (ନ)
	37.08%		15.69%		37.00%		27.27%		50.41%	
Labial (ଓଷ୍ଠ୍ୟ)	ପ	pa (ପ)	ଫ	pha (ଫ)	ବ	ba (ବ)	ଭ	bha (ଭ)	ମ	ma (ମ)
	35.64%		15.60%		38.67%		21.15%		41.92%	

Unstructured Consonants

Approximant (ଅନ୍ତଃସ୍ଥ) antaḥstha			Fricative (ଉଷ୍ମ) ūṣma			Others			Flap		
Palatal (ତାଲବ୍ୟ)	ଯ	ja (ଯ*)	Palatal (ତାଲବ୍ୟ)	ଶ	śa (ଶ)	Conjunct of କ and ଷ	କ୍ଷ	kṣa (କ୍ଷ)	Retroflex (ମୂର୍ଦ୍ଧନ୍ୟ)	ଡ଼	ḍa (ଡ଼)
	17.07%			22.06%			5.98%			NOT INCLUDED	
Retroflex (ମୂର୍ଦ୍ଧନ୍ୟ)	ର	ra (ର)	Dental (ଦନ୍ତ୍ୟ)	ସ	sa (ସ)	Retroflex Approximant	ଳ	ḷa (ଳ)	Retroflex (ମୂର୍ଦ୍ଧନ୍ୟ)	ଢ଼	ḍha (ଢ଼)
	62.07%			33.99%			NOT INCLUDED			NOT INCLUDED	
Dental (ଦନ୍ତ୍ୟ)	ଲ	la (ଲ)	Retroflex (ମୂର୍ଦ୍ଧନ୍ୟ)	ଷ	ṣa (ଷ)						
	33.33%			1.27%							
Labial (ଓଷ୍ଠ୍ୟ)	ବ	ba (ବ)	Guttural (କଣ୍ଠ୍ୟବର୍ଣ୍ଣ)	ହ	ha (ହ)						
	43.24%			24.62%							
Palatal (ତାଲବ୍ୟ)	ୟ	ya (ୟ)									
	NOT INCLUDED										

*- the "ଯ" (ja) letter of Odia does not have an equivalent letter in the Devanagari letter system when the pronunciation is concerned. The one that comes closest to it is "य".

1.3. Conclusions from the Table

Various types of data can be extracted from the tables and figures presented above.

The length of a song is inversely proportional to the density, i.e., the longer the song, the lesser the density. Hence we can conclude that the longest song has the least chance of being the densest one while the shortest song has the highest chance of being the densest one.

Parameter	Number of Words	Letter	Gīta/Song
Longest song by the Number of Words Used	167 words	ମ (ma)	ମଧୁରେ ମନ୍ଦ ମନ୍ଦ (madhure manda manda)
Shortest song by the Number of Words Used	48 words	ଛ (cha)	ଛଳବାହିନୀଶ ହେ (chaḷabāhinīśa he)

The number of times a letter has been used in that particular letter's song is directly proportional to the density, i.e., the more number of times a letter is used, the higher the density. Hence, it is clear that the song that has the highest chance of being the densest one is the one with the maximum repetition of the certain letter. While the song with the least chance of being the densest one is the one with the minimum repetition of the certain letter.

Parameter	Frequency of Letter	Letter	Gīta/Song
Maximum times a Letter has been used in a song	70 times	ମ (ma)	ମଧୁରେ ମନ୍ଦ ମନ୍ଦ (madhure manda manda)
Minimum times a Letter has been used in a song	1 time	ଷ (ṣa)	ଷଟପଦ ନୀଳକେଶୀ (ṣaṭapada nīl̤akeśā)

Since a Champū is recognised by the letter (eg: "କ" song, "ଖ" song, etc), analysing the density of a particular letter in a Champu song, using the frequency of its usage, provides insight into the poet's meticulous consideration, indicates the aesthetic quality of the composition and shows how tightly the particular letter has been used in the song. The density of a letter serves as a valuable parameter, reflecting the poet's thoughtfulness and enhancing the auditory appeal due to the heightened probability of alliteration and consonance. Using the data provided above, we can conclude the following:

Parameter	Density of the Letter	Letter	Gīta/Song
Highest Density of a Letter in a song	62.07% words contain "ର" (ra)	ର (ra)	ରସାଳସା ରେ (rasāl̤asā re)
Lowest Density of a Letter in a song	1.27% words contain "ଷ" (ṣa)	ଷ (ṣa)	ଷଟପଦ ନୀଳକେଶୀ (ṣaṭapada nīl̤akeśā)

In the "ର" (ra) song, in all the thirty six (36) times the letter "ର" (ra) has been used in the 58 words that constitute this song, we find a total of four (4) instances of alliterations and eleven (11) instances of consonance.

In this song, we find the density of the focal letter to be the highest, i.e., 62.07% of the total words of the "ର" (ra) song contains the letter "ର" (ra). This is an unusually high density, because the average density of a particular letter being used in its respective Champu is around 28.22%. This is by far the densest because the second in the list is the "ନ" (na) song which has 50.41% density, i.e., 9.66% (around 10%) less than "ର" (ra). It is also because the song is one of the smallest in size (third smallest).

The song is as follows:

ରସାଳସା **ରେ**, **ର**ସି ପୁଣି ଏ କି ଲୋକହସା **ରେ** ॥ପଦ॥
ରକ୍ତିମା ଚୁମ୍ବିଲା ଇନ୍ଦ୍ର ଆଶା**ରେ**,
ରାଜୀବେ ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲ ହେଲେ କାସା**ରେ** ॥୧॥
ରତିନାଥ ସମ**ର** ପ୍ରଶଂସା**ରେ**,
ରମଣୀ କେ ନ **ର**ସନ୍ତି ସଂସା**ରେ** ॥୨॥
ରସନ୍ତି **ର**ସିକେ ସିନା ନିଶା**ରେ**,
ରଜନୀ ଶେଷ**ରେ** ଏ କି ଦଶା **ରେ** ॥୩॥
ରମଣୀୟ ହେମକୁ ସୁଦୃଶା**ରେ**,
ରଖିଲୁ କେଡ଼େ ନିବିଡ଼େ ମସା**ରେ** ॥୪॥
ରହୁନା ଅଯଶ ଆଉ **ର**ସା**ରେ**,
ରସା**ରୁହ**ରୁ ଲତାକୁ ଖସା **ରେ** ॥୫॥
ରାଜା ଅଷ୍ଟଦୁର୍ଗ**ର** ଏ ଭାଷା**ରେ**,
ରଚେ ଏବେ ବିଜେ ହୋଇ ସୁସା**ରେ** ॥୬॥

Transliteration:

rasāḷasā **re**, **ra**si puṇi e ki lokahasā **re** ॥pada॥
raktimā cumbilā indra āśā**re**,
rājībe praphulla hele kāsā**re** ॥1॥
ratinātha sama**ra** praśaṃsā**re**,
ramaṇī ke na **ra**santi saṃsā**re** ॥2॥
rasanti **ra**sike sinā niśā**re**,
rajanī śeṣa**re** e ki daśā **re** ॥3॥
ramaṇīya hemaku sudṛśā**re**,
rakhilu keḍe nibiḍe masā**re** ॥4॥
rahunā ajaśa āu **ra**sā**re**,
rasā**ru**ha**ru** latāku khasā **re** ॥5॥
rājā aṣṭadurga**ra** e bhāṣā**re**,
race ebe bije hoi susā**re** ॥6॥

An exhaustive list of ***alliterations*** (repetition in the sound of the letter "ର" (ra) in the beginning of two consecutive words) in the "ର" (ra) song:

1. "**ର**ସାଳସା **ରେ**" (**ra**sāḷasā **re**)	2. "**ରେ ର**ସି" (**re ra**si)
3. "**ର**ସନ୍ତି **ର**ସିକେ" (**ra**santi **ra**sike)	4. "**ର**ସା**ରେ ର**ସା**ରୁ**ହ**ରୁ**" (**ra**sāre **ra**sā**ru**ha**ru**)

An exhaustive list of ***consonance*** (repetition in the sound of the letter "ର" (ra) anywhere in two consecutive words) in the "ର" (ra) song:

1. "ଆଶା**ରେ ରା**ଜୀବେ" (āśā**re rā**jībe)	2. "**ର**ତିନାଥ ସମ**ର**" (**ra**tinātha sama**ra**)
3. "ସମ**ର** ପ୍ରଶଂସା**ରେ**" (sama**ra** praśaṃsā**re**)	4. "ପ୍ରଶଂସା**ରେ ର**ମଣୀ" (praśaṃsā**re ra**maṇī)
5. "**ର**ସନ୍ତି ସଂସା**ରେ**" (**ra**santi saṃsā**re**)	6. "ନିଶା**ରେ ର**ଜନୀ" (niśā**re ra**janī)
7. "**ର**ଜନୀ ଶେଷ**ରେ**" (**ra**janī śeṣa**re**)	8. "ସୁଦୃଶା**ରେ ର**ଖିଲୁ" (sudṛśā**re ra**khilu)
9. "ରସା**ରେ** ରସା**ରୁ**ହ**ରୁ**" (rasā**re** rasāruha**ru**)	10. "**ରା**ଜା ଅଷ୍ଟଦୁର୍ଗ**ର**" (**rā**jā aṣṭadurga**ra**)
11. "ଭାଷା**ରେ ର**ଚେ" (bhāṣā**re ra**ce)	

Conflict of Interest

I hereby declare that the results of the research were not affected by sponsors/influencers and hence is fully neutral.

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